



MAXIMIZING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

By: LifeSquire

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INTRODUCTION

Having the right executive assistant is the key to seemingly having it all for busy entrepreneurs, executives, and other professionals. However, creating a successful working relationship does not happen overnight or without effort. It takes work.

We created this e-book as a guide to make hiring and working with your executive assistant easier for you. In this e-book, we'll review what it takes to maximize your relationship with your new executive assistant. By maximizing this relationship, you'll both get the most out of the experience. You'll also create a long-lasting professional bond.

Maximizing your relationship with your new executive assistant based on five principles:

1. Hiring
2. Training
3. Empowering
4. Setting boundaries
5. Coaching

This e-book will explore each of these principles further. It will explain how completing each step ensures a long-lasting, productive relationship between you and your executive assistant.

ABOUT VALERIE RILEY



Valerie Riley founded LifeSquire in 2007 after working as a personal assistant.

LifeSquire originated from a desire to do two things:

1. To give clients back their weekends, which they often spent catching up from busy weeks
2. To launch a business model that would lead an industry.

Riley and her team fulfill that mission every day. LifeSquire started as a personal assistant firm, offering household management, errands, and administrative support. And while it still offers that service, its focus now is on LifeSquire Connect, which connects busy executives with executive assistants for hire.

Riley says she is "futuristic" with the ability to see what others will want and need five years from now. And she operates her business in that manner, allowing it to stay on the industry's cutting edge.

When she's not working, Riley spends her time planning for the future and playing with her two dogs.

CHAPTER 1

HIRING AND ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

Being self-aware may be the most crucial aspect of hiring a new assistant of any kind. Building and maximizing your relationship with your assistant starts with you. Being aware of your management style can make or break that working relationship.

Self-awareness is the key to office productivity. Granted, it may not be the first characteristic that comes to mind when thinking of what makes a great boss. But, when you understand what makes you tick, you respond to situations more quickly and effectively. This understanding makes life easier for your whole team, including your assistant.

WHAT IS SELF-AWARENESS?

Being self-aware is the ability to be honest with yourself. It is taking a long look inside yourself and monitoring your behaviors, habits, thoughts, emotions, and reactions. Self-awareness is knowing that you think of yourself as punctual, but you require a detailed calendar and alarm reminders to be on time. Simply put, being self-aware is knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Self-awareness means focusing on the reality of your behavior instead of the story you tell others.

WHY IS SELF-AWARENESS FOR A LEADER IMPORTANT?

Self-aware leaders are more effective in motivating employees. They tend to have an open mind to new ideas and excel at making others feel supported and valued.

We all have strengths, and we all have weaknesses. When you know yourself, you can hire employees that bring balance to your weaknesses. For example, you are super intelligent but also unorganized. You can hire an executive assistant that helps you stay organized. With self-awareness, you can better understand what you need to manage your stress levels and still be productive.

HOW TO BE MORE SELF-AWARE IN THE WORKPLACE

Becoming more self-aware takes work and patience. But once you know what you need from your assistant, you can make a more informed hire. Then you also can establish a more effective working relationship with them.

TO BECOME MORE SELF-AWARE IN THE WORKPLACE:

Determine Your Strengths

Knowing your strengths is powerful. People who know their strengths are more engaged at work, more productive, happier, and healthier. Take an online quiz, like the [StrengthsFinders test](#), to learn about your strengths. Once you know your strengths, share and discuss them with potential assistants.

Compliment Your Weaknesses

We all want to strengthen our weaknesses. Instead of improving on your weaknesses, lean into your strengths and hire an assistant that will provide balance. Hire for what you specifically need, not a basic set of skills.

Ask for Feedback

Knowing yourself can't be complete without knowing how others perceive you. Although it may feel frightening, ask a trusted colleague, like your assistant, how you react in various scenarios. Their candid responses will teach you something about yourself that you didn't know. Start by asking, "How am I doing?"

Set Boundaries

We all have limitations, and it's crucial to develop firm boundaries around them. If you haven't determined yours, take time to reflect on them and then communicate them with your new assistant. To maximize your relationship with your assistant, you have to let them go beyond the boundaries you set for others.

Be Open-Minded

A new assistant will bring you new ideas, challenges, solutions, feedback, and more. Therefore, it's essential to be open-minded about their suggestions. To have a successful relationship with your assistant, you have to be curious about what they have to offer. You also have to be willing to try new things.

HOW YOUR SELF-AWARENESS HELPS YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

While being more self-aware has many benefits for you, it is also beneficial for your new assistant. Self-awareness helps you hire the best assistant for you. It also helps them succeed in their new role.

When an executive is more self-aware, their assistant can:

Provide the Best Support

Your assistant can't provide you with the support you need without knowing what you need. Over time, they will learn more about you. They also will determine how to best support you, but it isn't so simple in the beginning. When working with a new assistant, telling them precisely what you need will start your working relationship off right.

Anticipate Your Needs

Imagine that you need to prepare for an important meeting. You walk into your office to find an agenda and other important meeting-related information on your desk. When your assistant understands your needs, they can anticipate your next step. Sometimes they'll leave you thinking that they read your mind.

Keep You on Track

Whether you are timely or not, your calendar dictates your day. When you hand your schedule over to your assistant, you likely want it handled a certain way. Knowing this, you can tell your assistant what you need to keep you on schedule. They can set reminders or do whatever else you need. Relying on your assistant this way also builds trust in your relationship.

Enforce Your Boundaries

Sometimes, boundaries you set aren't easy to keep in place. For example, if you tend to be a "yes" person, you might take on too many projects. In this scenario, you communicate with your assistant that you can't take on any more projects. They then become your gatekeeper and critically question any project that comes your way. Talk to your assistant about your boundaries, and most importantly, let them help you stick to them.

Innovate

Your assistant may not come up with new product ideas, but they will see ways to improve aspects of your business. Maybe they will think of a simple way to organize your files or a way to enhance the company's culture. Either way, when you are open to ideas or feedback, they will feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with you.

Don't hire an assistant who is just like you. Instead, use self-awareness to determine your strengths and weaknesses. Hire someone who fills the gaps your weaknesses create. Then be open and honest with them from the beginning about how they can help you better fulfill your role.

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

Your assistant is not a mind reader. They may come to anticipate what you need with time, but it is vital to communicate as clearly as possible in the beginning.

To establish a strong working relationship, start your assistant when you have time to dedicate to them. Let them shadow you and ask questions about your duties, your company, and people's roles within it. Set aside time to introduce your assistant to the business and allow them to know that they have your undivided attention.

Avoid interruptions and distractions in the first few days. Spending the time upfront will allow your assistant to work independently more quickly.

Once the initial training ends, schedule a weekly meeting with your assistant to make sure you're on the same page. Have the assistant set the meeting's agenda with time for you to talk about your needs and expectations for the week.

ASSISTANT TRAINING

An assistant needs to have a thorough understanding of their support role. They need to grasp the boundaries and practicalities. In addition, they need excellent time management skills and a real sense of organization.

A good assistant may already have these skills. Regardless, they can learn them. It is worth investing in your assistant's education. [LifeSquire Academy](#) offers a customized curriculum that covers the integral aspects of the profession.

CREATE THE RELATIONSHIP YOU NEED

Your assistant can only be as helpful as you allow them to be. Start by determining what you need help with. Creating lists of jobs and tasks is a good way of accomplishing that. Pay particular attention to those things that stop you from achieving your goals. Those are the tasks to delegate to your assistant.

Share or pass on the jobs you dislike doing. Be open about your pet peeves. Making those clear at the beginning prevents or minimizes annoying situations later.

Set clear expectations. Without those, your new assistant will find it hard to understand their priorities.

Allowing your assistant to work well for you involves disclosing some personal information. Discuss your obligations at work as well as outside of the office. Ensure your assistant understands your relationships and knows who can interrupt you and who cannot.

COMMUNICATE MORE

As a general rule, it is better to communicate more rather than less. But, everyone has their personal preferences.

Share your preferred communication method with your assistant. Consider scheduling a daily debriefing session along with the weekly meeting described above. The daily debriefing doesn't need to take more than 15 minutes. It is an excellent way to review the day and look forward to the next day's activities.

Embracing feedback sounds easier than it is at times. But, maximizing your relationship with your assistant is a two-way street. Listening to their input and encouraging communication will go a long way toward establishing a positive work environment.

It will take time for your new assistant to understand and embrace the job entirely. But spending some time upfront training will help speed up the process. Also, daily debriefings and weekly planning meetings allow you to share feedback and move toward a more productive relationship.

CHAPTER 3

EMPOWERING YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

Empowering your assistant to do their job to the best of their ability means avoiding micromanagement. Instead, you need to start building trust from the beginning. It may take a little time to build trust, but it will be worthwhile in the long run.

Be realistic about what empowering your assistant means. Help them understand that it's acceptable and expected for them to make mistakes. Help them avoid getting in over their head. Be realistic about what they can accomplish for you and your company. But also give them space to exceed your expectations.

SHOW TRUST IN YOUR ASSISTANT

The best assistants are caretakers at heart. When you constantly second-guess their work, you crush their confidence. The best way to empower your assistant is to show them that you trust them. Share project goals and allow your assistant to create the means to get there. Encourage your assistant to make decisions without your guidance. Of course, there is a chance that they may not do either of these the exact way you would. But you can feel confident that they will do everything they can to get the result you requested.

UNDERSTAND THAT MISTAKES HAPPEN

As you encourage your assistant to make more decisions, you also must understand that mistakes will happen. How you react to the mistake will determine if you are empowering or sabotaging their growth. For your assistant to feel more confident with decision-making, you have to allow room for them to make mistakes safely.

We've written in more detail about [empowerment](#).

HAVE REGULAR REVIEWS

Having regular uninterrupted time with your assistant is essential for their growth. Use this time to provide feedback and learn more about them. Find out how they see their role in the company and how they would like to see it grow. It is also an excellent time to do an assistant wellness check. There are times assistants can feel isolated. Checking in with them helps them feel supported.

SHOW APPRECIATION

Everyone loves to feel appreciated. Unfortunately, sometimes we get so busy we forget that even our assistant wants to know how they are doing. Showing appreciation does more than making someone feel valued. It also encourages your assistant to do what you appreciate again (and even better this time). You shouldn't be stingy with thank yous. There also will be times that you may want to do more than express gratitude. For these times, find out what your assistant's [Love Language](#) is. For example, if your assistant's Love Language is receiving gifts, then give them a thoughtful gift of appreciation. If your assistant's love language is quality time, create an opportunity for them to spend time out of the office with their friends or family.

CREATE A COMPANY CULTURE OF CONNECTION

Since assistants can feel like they are not a part of the team, make them an active participant in the company's culture. Give your assistant ownership of an event or task that connects them to the team. It doesn't have to be a big task. For example, during one of your meetings, ask them if there is an event or task they would like to assume.

PROVIDE PATHS TO GROWTH

When your assistant learns a new skill, it will benefit you and the company. Once you know how your assistant would like to see their role grow, encourage that growth. Consider sending your assistant to role-specific classes, such as [LifeSquire Academy](#) or other programs that teach them new skills.

CHALLENGE YOUR ASSISTANT

Just like you should provide ways for your assistants to learn new skills, it also is important to challenge them. You hired your assistant for a specific role, but staying within those boundaries can get monotonous. Beat the boredom blues by giving your assistant new projects like their current role but taking it a step further.

LISTEN MORE

You will develop a close relationship with your assistant that allows them to come to you with problems or ideas. But, if you don't listen to them, they eventually will stop providing their views. So listen when your assistant talks to you. By doing this and by creating a dialogue, you are affirming your [commitment to communication](#).

You want your assistant to do their best work in a job they love. They can't do that unless you trust and empower them. You can start building trust as soon as you hire a new assistant. Part of this is letting them know that you value them and avoiding micromanaging them. Let them know that you know they will make mistakes, but it's ok as long as they learn and develop from the errors. Equip them to do their job and then give them the space to do it.

CHAPTER 4

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

A productive and healthy professional relationship with your assistant means you're likely to get more than you ask for in the office. Setting boundaries between you and your assistant is key to creating a healthy professional relationship. It's important to remember that your assistant is a fellow professional, not your closest friend. This boundary should be clear in your day-to-day interactions.

BOUNDARIES MAKE AND BREAK ASSISTANT RELATIONSHIPS

Boundary issues aren't always apparent. Often, we hear horror stories that stem from a lack of boundaries.

Imagine it is Monday morning and time for your debriefing with your assistant. Your assistant greets you and asks how your weekend was. You had a good weekend, so you share some details. You ask them the same question. Unfortunately, they had a lousy weekend. Their car broke down on the highway, and their child broke a family heirloom. Your 15-minute debriefing meeting has gone on for 30 minutes, and you haven't discussed a single thing related to work.

The conversation could have gone differently. Suppose you shared your weekend with your assistant. Then, when you asked your assistant about their weekend, they responded with a simple, "it was good." Out of curiosity, you dig for more information. Eventually, you get the details out of your assistant. Afterward, you look at the clock and realize you are running late.

At first, getting to know what is going on in your assistant's life does not seem like a bad thing. But these are examples of bad boundaries.

Assistants Take Care of You

You likely hired your assistant because you needed support. You need someone to act as a gatekeeper and keep you on track when you are on a deadline. You hired your assistant to take care of you, and it is essential to remember that.

When the boundary lines begin to blur, you start seeing your assistant more like a friend than an employee. This friendship is problematic. In the beginning, you may feel comfortable knowing more about the person caring for you. But over time, [common issues](#) will arise.

MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

For the executive and assistant relationship to work, your assistant must set and maintain boundaries with you. But that does not mean that you can't help.

EXAMPLES OF HOW AN EXECUTIVE CAN HELP THEIR ASSISTANT MAINTAIN THEIR PERSONAL BOUNDARIES INCLUDE:

Not Digging for More Information

If you ask your assistant a question about their personal life, and they reply with a short and positive response, accept it and move on.

Establishing a Schedule

Executives often work far more than anyone else on their team. Don't expect your assistant to always be available. Stay within their working hours. If you need them after hours, ask if they are available. Don't just expect them to drop everything for you during their own time.

Be Upfront With Expectations

Communication and expectations should always be at the forefront. Your assistant can better set boundaries when they know what you expect of them. If something changes, communicate that.

Sometimes You May Hear a "No"

During busy times, you may ask your assistant to do more or take on things not usually in their role. But, just like you, sometimes your assistant may not be able to take on more or stay late. Accept the "no," and ask them who they think could help out instead.

If boundary issues dwell in your workplace, it's time to start correcting that. It may not happen overnight, but maintaining boundaries will make you and your assistant more productive. It's best to set boundaries from the beginning than to try to create them after the fact.

CHAPTER 5

COACHING YOUR NEW ASSISTANT

Remember the last time you learned something new, perhaps tried cooking a new recipe? Your family or friends would have told you what they liked about it or what might be better next time. It's more than simple comments. It's feedback.

We receive a lot of feedback, personally and professionally. Providing feedback to someone who assists you with so many things may be difficult. But feedback is necessary for your assistant to thrive in their work. Setting the expectation of feedback helps establish two-way input as part of your relationship. Feedback as a means of coaching then becomes another regular part of your relationship.

SET A GOAL TO COACH THROUGH FEEDBACK

When you start working with a new assistant, there may be times that are a little awkward. During the "getting to know you" period, your assistant will learn how to best support you. They likely won't do everything the way you expect them to.

It is crucial to start coaching through feedback during this period. Now is the time to work past the insecurities surrounding feedback and set the goal to share. When you see something that isn't up to your standards or is incorrect, talk to your assistant about it. Don't fix it yourself. When you have your assistant resolve issues, you help prevent the mistake from happening in the future.

GIVE FEEDBACK REGULARLY

Even though your company has annual reviews, waiting a whole year to talk about a mistake won't help you or your assistant. Give feedback regularly.

In the beginning, meet with your assistant weekly until you both feel confident in the role. After that, how often you have those meetings is up to you. If your assistant still needs your guidance, schedule feedback monthly. If not, maybe quarterly is enough. There is no secret formula, but you should provide feedback regularly. Nothing that comes up in an annual evaluation should be a surprise.

BE SPECIFIC

For most things, it doesn't matter how the mistake happened as long as it gets fixed properly. Maybe your assistant misunderstood, or perhaps you didn't provide clear enough instructions. When it is time to give feedback, you have to be extremely clear and specific about what you want to happen. Remember that your assistant isn't a mind reader, so share everything you can. Once you have shared what you need to, leave some time for your assistant to ask questions.

GIVE MORE GOOD THAN BAD

When people hear about giving feedback, they instantly think about the negative. To have a perfect balance, however, you need also to share the positive. It would help if you always gave more positive feedback to your assistant than negative.

You do three things by giving more good feedback:

- You build your assistant's confidence in their abilities.
- You help them anticipate your needs and learn your preferences.
- You make them more open to hearing and learning from constructive feedback.

If your assistant only hears the things they're doing wrong, their self-confidence plummets. They will dread coming to work. More importantly, they won't try to go above and beyond because they'll feel like they can't meet the lowest standards.

Your assistant feels better when they hear how well they are doing. This feedback will make them more confident and feel like they can meet challenges. As a result, they will become determined to do more and better work. And they will feel more loyal to you.

CREATE A FEEDBACK SANDWICH

A feedback sandwich is highly effective, makes giving feedback easier, and is common in workplaces worldwide. What you do is sandwich a piece of negative feedback between two pieces of positive feedback.

For example, you start by telling your assistant that you love the new color-coded filing system they created. Next, you tell them that a few fields were blank in a recent report that they need to repair. Finally, you finish it by telling them that they are doing a great job saving you time each day.

SOLICIT FEEDBACK

No one is perfect. Even if you try to create the healthiest working relationship possible with your assistant, there will be areas for improvement.

It isn't your assistant's place to tell you how to do your job. But sometimes there are simple things you can do to make their job easier. Make it a habit from the beginning for your assistant to provide you with feedback during your one-on-one meetings. What can you do to help them?

ALWAYS FOLLOW-UP

Follow up with your assistant after you've provided constructive feedback. Instead of falling into micromanagement, turn the feedback into a conversation. Have them tell you what they need to make your suggestions a reality and work together to make it happen. From that conversation, you can learn how to maximize your assistant's productivity and provide them with the tools they need to succeed.

Your assistant may join your company with amazing skills in being an assistant. But they've never been your assistant. Coaching them from the beginning and making feedback a regular part of your conversations will help you both thrive in the workplace.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Maximizing your relationship with your new assistant is easier than you think. Following five fundamental principles related to hiring, training, empowering, setting boundaries, and coaching will create a successful, long-lasting partnership. Following these principles also will help you and your assistant get the most out of your professional relationship.

CHAPTER 7

WORKING WITH LIFESQUIRE

A good assistant can improve your work life for the better, helping make you more organized and productive. Assistants help manage your time and complete day-to-day tasks, freeing your time for things important to you, professionally and personally. Whether you want to hire a [personal assistant](#), a [virtual assistant](#), or an [executive assistant](#), LifeSquire can help. Already have an assistant that you'd like to help develop more? Send them to [LifeSquire Academy](#). The professional online training program is for executive assistants, aspiring assistants, personal assistants, or anyone working in a support staff role who wants to take their career to the next level.

LifeSquire Academy teaches skills including those needed to:

- deal with difficult bosses and chaotic offices
- create and set professional boundaries
- understand proper etiquette
- create organizational systems
- be a time management pro

LifeSquire is here to assist with training and tips to support you and your assistant along the way. [Contact us](#) to find out more.